

"I mean," he says, "people thought you were a tough guy ...."

"oh," I say, "I am ...."

"but how about your image?" he asks. "people don't expect you to be like this ...."

"I know," I say, "I've lost my beer-gut. I've come down from 44 to 38, I've lost 21 pounds ...."

"I mean," he goes on, "that you represented a man walking carelessly and bravely into death, foolishly but with style ... like Don Quixote, the windmills ...."

"don't tell anybody," I answer, "and maybe we can save the image or at least prolong it ...."

"you'll be going to God next," he says.

"my god," I say, "is 3 bottles of ...."

"all right," he interrupts, "I suppose it's all right."

"I still fuck," I say, "and I play the horses and I like to go to the boxing matches and I still love my daughter and I almost love my present girlfriend, maybe I even do ...."

"all right," he says, "can you give me a ride back to my car?"

"all right," I say, "I still drive cars."

I lock the door and we go down the walk toward my car.

AND MY MOTHER HAD A NICE UMBRELLA AND  
LOOKED BEAUTIFUL AND FUNNY IN THE RAIN ....

right now I think my car can use a good wax job. and some day I'd like to go to Madrid. and like many people I tried suicide once and failed. no, I tried twice and failed, and I also saved one man and one woman from suicide. it's almost boring isn't it?: how we go about doing these things and then forget them and sit in a chair, eating an apple and reading a newspaper, or taking a bath and washing under the armpits.